

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 13 have been amended. Claims 2, 3, 9, 14-16, 23, 25-28 have been cancelled. Claim 10 has been withdrawn by the Examiner. Claims 1, 4-8, 10-13, 17-22 and 24 remain pending in the present application. Basis for the amendment can be found throughout the specification, claims and drawings as originally filed.

The undersigned attorney would like to thank Examiner Kramer for the courtesies extended to him during the personal interview on January 5, 2006. At the interview, above Claims 1 and 13 were discussed. The Examiner conceded that the above proposed amendments to Claims 1 and 13 would overcome the art of record.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1, 4-8, 11-13, 17-22 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) alleging them to be unpatentable over Lumpkin (U.S. Patent No. 6,244,396) in view of Shibata et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,926,978).

As was pointed out at the interview, the Lumpkin and Shibata et al. references fail to disclose or suggest above Claims 1 and 13. Claims 1 and 13 have been amended to further define that the gap between the adjacent first and second friction elements prohibits the first and second friction elements from contacting one another to promote air flow around each of the friction elements. The Examiner's combination fails to disclose or suggest such features.

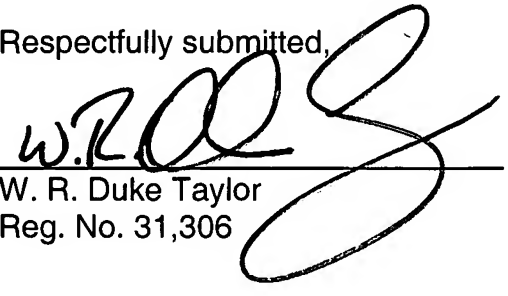
Accordingly, Applicants believe independent Claims 1 and 13 to be patentable distinct over the art cited by the Examiner. Accordingly, Claims 4-8 and 10-12 as well as 17-22 and 24 which depend from Claims 1 and 13, respectively, are patentably distinct over the art cited by the Examiner.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to pass the case to issue at his earliest possible convenience. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the present application, he should not hesitate to contact the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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